




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MACKAY

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ADJOURNMENT

Rats of Tobruk; Mackay Electorate

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (9.11 pm): On Friday afternoon I attended a solemn remembrance celebration for the Rats of Tobruk. The Rats of Tobruk is the name taken by soldiers involved in the siege of Tobruk, which was the longest siege in British and Commonwealth history. It began on 10 April 1941 and ended on 7 December 1941, with the Allies claiming the first defeat of the German war machine in World War II. In their radio broadcasts the Germans had bragged that they had them trapped like rats, which is how the name came about. The epic eight-month siege cost 832 Australian lives. Of those men, 120 were from Mackay. Names can be found on some of our streets and all of them on a memorial erected in Queen's Park.

The ceremony is special because it is organised and run by four Mackay schools, with students and local cadets officiating the whole ceremony. The ceremony is a living memorial to the legacy and service of our service men and women. Len Hanson OAM instigated the service in Mackay in 1991. The schools involved are the Victoria Park State School, St Patricks College, North Mackay State School and the Whitsunday Anglican College. All schools have a connection to the siege. The students of the participating schools need to be commended for the dignified way that they conducted the service.

After the 2015 election it was apparent that the Mackay electorate had been left in a sad and sorry state by the Newman LNP government and under the stewardship of the then treasurer, the member for Clayfield. There were no plans in place to support Central Queensland and its mining communities at the end of the resources boom. Unemployment rose, businesses closed and mental health issues in the communities were a sad reality of the situation. The Palaszczuk Labor government has turned that situation around by supporting the regions.

I can report that the \$28 million project to rebuild the Vines Creek bridges is underway, with earth-moving equipment on the site and cranes and pylon drivers at work. Those bridges will provide two years of work. Local workers are also engaged in the new state-of-the-art fire station. It is great to see local contractors preparing the site and laying the brickwork. Ian McAulty has started his apprenticeship on that build. He received a start in the workforce through the Palaszczuk government's Skilling Queenslanders for Work program. He was one of the many outstanding participants. Another great project is the Mackay Showgrounds \$4 million refurbishment. This shows that the Palaszczuk government is getting Mackay people back to work.